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ADMINISTRATIVE CENTRALIZATION AND DECENTRALIZATION IN ENGLAND.

There has been manifest in recent years a growing tendency toward the redistribution of administrative power between the central and local authorities in the state governments of the American Union. Hitherto we have been accustomed to look upon the existing distribution or classification of "local" and "central" powers in the various states as something permanent, as a "balance" of powers which should not be disturbed. The principle of extreme local autonomy has so long been held inviolate that it seems almost beyond the possibility of a change or modification. Recently, however, new conditions have arisen which are no longer in harmony with the old, uncompromising spirit of local independence, and which are gradually modifying the more important outlines of our state systems of administrative organization. Numerous examples of these changed conditions and of the administrative changes thereby produced will at once suggest themselves. There is first, the class of those administrative functions which, from their earliest assumption by the state, have always been assigned to the central administrative offices, e. g., state control and supervision over the medical, pharmaceutical and allied professions, state supervision of railways, of forestry conditions, and above all the activity of the state in the protection of the laboring classes as shown in mine and factory inspection. In the second place, the recent changes in certain phases of our economic and social environment have powerfully influenced another set of administrative functions which, in America, have almost without exception been considered as the peculiar and exclusive province of local activity, such as sanitary and educational affairs, and more especially highway administration. In

both of these classes of administrative activity may be traced a sharp and decided movement toward the restriction of local power,—in some cases the mere establishment of a modified central control, as in educational and highway matters; in others the total exclusion of the local bodies and the introduction of a highly centralized administrative hierarchy, as in the administration of the factory and mining legislation and, partially, the game laws, etc. There is in other words a definite impetus toward the complete centralization of certain activities and also a well-marked tendency toward the establishment of a state administrative control over the local bodies to a degree heretofore unknown in America.

The question of centralization, or of central administrative control then, is squarely before us, at least in the more highly developed of our American states, and we may therefore seek some light upon our own problems by examining the solutions which this question has received in Europe. Our attention will be directed to England whose administrative organization may, perhaps, from the American standpoint be regarded with the greatest interest.

English administrative institutions have long stood before the world as the classic model of local autonomy. English ideas of government have spread to all parts of the globe, resulting, wherever they have taken root, in the formation and growth of states whose local administrative subdivisions in their turn enjoyed a high degree of local independence and activity. The performance by the parish, the town, the county and other local bodies, of an unusual share of state functions, and the comparative freedom of these distinctively local units from central administrative interference or control, seem to be cardinal principles of the English system of administration. This notion is especially prevalent on the Continent. One eminent authority, Professor Gneist, has even gone so far as to declare that the English parliamentary system is inseparably connected with the peculiar

form of local government* existing in England, and that this fact is plainly demonstrated by the experiences of those Continental countries which have sought to imitate the English Parliament in their national representative assemblies. Leaving this aside for the moment, however, it may safely be said that a high degree of decentralization has always appeared to be an essential characteristic of the method of government practiced all over the world by English-speaking peoples.

Since the beginning of the present century, however, certain most important internal changes have been wrought in the character of England's local organization, and these changes, while tending toward a further development of local institutions, have also been marked by a most pronounced and unmistakable tendency toward centralization. A few words will suffice to explain the causes of this development. On the Continent we find that the formation of the two most important western states, France and Prussia, resulted, in each instance, from a long and violent struggle between the crown and the nobility. In this struggle the king finally gained the ascendancy. In order to win this position, however, as well as to secure it firmly when won, the monarch, in each country, found it necessary to organize a highly centralized bureaucracy. This civil army, whose members were forced to render unquestioning obedience to the monarch's every wish, controlled every important function of state activity from the central ministries down to the smallest communes. Thus, by means of this formidable administrative hierarchy the opposition of the independent cities and of the lesser nobility was crushed, and the power of the king extended. In this way

* Professor Gneist saw in the extended functions and activity of the justice of the peace, and in the fact that the latter was an honorary office, the distinguishing characteristics of the English system. He maintained that not only historically, but also at the present time, the English Parliament was essentially based on these features of the local organization, and that the changes in the latter, which we are about to describe, were entirely out of harmony with the true historical development.

also the absolute monarchy arose and in its rise gave birth to the state from which finally, were formed the highly centralized administrative systems still existing at the beginning of the present century.

In England, the conflict did not result in a victory for the monarch, and this difference in the historical development accounts not only for the more substantial growth of the parliament, but also for the extreme decentralization of the English administrative organization. Had the crown been victorious in its long conflict with the nobles there can be no doubt that a centralized organization similar to the systems of Louis XIV. and Frederic William I. on the Continent or to that introduced by William the Conqueror, would ultimately have arisen also in England. True it is that at certain epochs England enjoyed the advantages flowing from the rule of aggressive and powerful monarchs; yet the work of these latter cannot be compared with the remarkable rôle played in nation-building by the monarchs of Prussia and of France. The main element of strength in the English administrative organization at the close of the last century lay, not in the power of the monarchy, but in the consummate skill and political training of the governing classes. This political training, however, had arisen from centuries of practice and exercise in the active duties of local administration. The governing classes, in other words, as Gneist remarked, had long been accustomed by local activity to place themselves in a position which is so necessary to the proper conduct of administrative affairs. They were accustomed to thinking and acting for the people. The local administrative bodies in the hands of men with such political training did not require constant direction, stimulation and assistance from the central government; on the contrary, they acted spontaneously, independently of the crown, and often in opposition to it. However, this system of local organization was pre-eminently an aristocratic one. The various local units acted,

it is true, independently and spontaneously. But this spontaneity was not, in any sense, the spontaneity of a popular or democratic organization; it resulted rather from the administrative activity of the landed aristocracy and gentry in the offices of justice of the peace and other honorary posts. These unpaid officials, who were appointed and not elected, and who enjoyed therefore some degree of independence of local influence or, as it would perhaps be better to say, who guided and formed public opinion in the locality, had gradually absorbed nearly all the more important functions of local administration. The great mass of the people however took no active part in local affairs. Yet such was the efficiency of the local administration as carried on by the landed gentry that no serious discomfort seems to have been felt until the beginning of the industrial revolution. It is necessary to keep this in mind.

The later movements and changes whose nature and importance it is our object to consider, may be summarized as follows:

1. The transfer of all the more important functions of administration from the justices of the peace (the representatives of the class which hitherto had carried on the local administration) to other organs, thus leaving the former a judicial rather than an administrative competence.

2. The disintegration of the administrative power so transferred and the distribution of its various parts among new organs specially created for the purpose of receiving these powers, resulting in what is usually termed the specialization of local functions and local organisms.

3. The dependence of the newly created local offices and boards upon popular election, or what might well be called the popularization of the local organs.

4. The transfer to the central government of far-reaching powers of supervision, direction and, in some instances, of active intervention in these matters of purely "local"

concern, thus giving rise to an important degree of administrative centralization.

It need hardly be recalled that this whole series of administrative changes formed an essential part of the great reform movement of 1834 and of the succeeding years, a movement which had for its prime object and final result the extension of political rights to still wider circles of the people. That such a connection did without doubt exist between the political and the administrative reforms is evidenced by the fact that one of the most important effects of the administrative changes may be seen in the increased dependence of the local administration on the popular will and in the greater co-operation and participation by the people in the local affairs, a change that has been termed the popularization of the local bodies. The outlines of the great political movement just mentioned are familiar to all. Suffice it to say, that the invention and perfection of various kinds of machinery and the consequent rise of the factory system had produced sweeping changes throughout the industrial world, that corresponding social changes had immediately followed and that, finally, a considerable conflict of interest between the capitalistic and laboring classes had already made itself distinctly felt. Industrial laborers found themselves reduced to such a condition as to give apparent confirmation to the theories of Malthus, and, later on, to the doctrine of the wage fund. It is by no means strange that in this dire extremity the state was looked to for relief, and that such measures as a reform of the poor-laws, a regulation of the constantly growing factory evils, and the establishment of a general system of elementary education by the state were advocated. The cause of the working classes was, in addition, much strengthened by the rise of large industrial centres in localities until then deprived of adequate parliamentary representation. The first step in the reform, a conservative enlargement of the electoral lists, being once

taken, and the manufacturing towns having received their share of representatives in parliament, the social legislation followed of necessity. After the political reform bills came a series of reform laws on the subject of poor relief, factory inspection, health laws, and laws providing for the organization of a system of public schools. The promoters of this legislation, however, were, from the very outset, confronted by the question of administrative organization. Had they been Continental legislators they would doubtless have devised some general plan for the reorganization of the entire system of local government to meet the changed social conditions. Being Englishmen, they postponed all radical, fundamental alterations of the existing organization and adopted only such changes as seemed absolutely necessary, and at such times as a change appeared unavoidable. Thus we find the period of social and administrative reform in England extending over nearly half a century. It may also be said that the English local administrative organization presents an appearance of patchwork unknown even in the United States.

Let us examine briefly some of the more important of these changes in their concrete forms. One of the first and most important of these finds expression in the law of August, 1834, intended primarily to abolish the notorious abuses of the out-door system of poor relief, at that time administered mainly under the control of the justices of the peace. This method of poor relief, which consists of assistance given in the homes of the poor, had resulted in the most pernicious consequences. Since the able-bodied as well as the impotent received subsidies, employers were enabled to pay minimum wages, the parish footing up the rest. At the same time the habit of receiving public support had robbed the laboring classes of all ideas of independence, economy and thrift, while the poor-rate or tax had risen to gigantic proportions. Only one solution of the difficulty was offered, viz., an extension

of the common workhouse system, or "in-door relief," in order that those dependent on public assistance might be supported at much less expense and that certain features of disagreeable publicity might attach to the reception of public support. These institutions of public charity however could not under normal circumstances be established in each parish because of the increased financial burden thereby entailed. It became necessary, therefore, to seek some larger administrative unit for the support of the workhouse under the system of in-door relief, and this problem was solved in the law of 1834, by the formation of "unions of parishes." Each union, composed of several parishes, varying in number according to population, established and maintained its workhouse, conducting its administration by means of a board of guardians. The latter may be said to have absorbed all the more important functions of poor-relief. The part played by the single parish was still further diminished in 1868, and so remained until the law of 1894, whose provisions will be discussed when reached in the chronological treatment of the general subject.

The union is presided over by the board of guardians who are elected for from one to three years, usually three. Women may be electors and are also eligible to election. Other officials in the union (relieving officer, clerk, director of workhouse, physicians, etc.), are either elected by the people or by the local board. These provisions of the earlier laws seem on recital to be most natural and even common-place, yet they involve all the more important features of the subsequent changes. The laws cited transfer important powers of local administration from the justice of the peace. Again, the vesting of these powers in an elective board marks the establishment of a system of local administration which was dependent directly on the popular will as expressed at periodical elections and secured the co-operation of a large number of citizens in the management of local affairs. Lastly, we may discover thus

early the first signs of a remarkable and uninterrupted movement toward the establishment of a central administrative control over the local bodies.

The law of 1834 provided for the establishment of a central office composed of the Poor Law Commissioners (in 1874 the Poor Law Board), which should be charged with the control and direction of the administration of the poor laws as carried on by the local unions. The organization and powers of this central board will be taken up in due order; in passing, it is important to note that these early laws were decisive in determining the tendency of the later legislation. What followed was merely the further development of the principles already laid down, and their application to the organization of other and different fields of local administration. Thus the act of 1848, and subsequent laws, provided for the organization of special sanitary districts, administered in like manner by elected boards with the aid of subordinate officials, health officers, inspectors of nuisances, etc. These boards also are dependent upon popular election, receive no pay and serve for a comparatively limited term, usually three years. Women may vote and are also eligible to these offices, but the elective franchise, as in all local elections, presupposes a nominal property qualification. The legislation of the years named also provided in its turn for the establishment of a central directory or supervisory office called the Board of Health which was charged with the execution of the various "public health" laws. By this means a close supervision by the central authority of the workings of the various local sanitary districts was established. There had thus arisen two entirely new central authorities, the Poor Law Board and the Board of Health, endowed with extended powers of supervision and control over the activity of the local bodies in their respective fields of administration.

The next step was the consolidation of these two central boards in 1871 into a sort of department of the interior

called the Local Government Board. This consolidation afforded not only a more practical and convenient grouping of the central organization, but also especially strengthened the central power in its relations with the local bodies, and thus increased the already existing tendency toward administrative centralization. A similar movement became noticeable in the administration of highways, which was carried on partly by separate highway districts, and partly by the existing sanitary districts, but usually, under the control and direction of the central authorities.

A still more striking example of the irresistible movement toward centralization which was sweeping over all departments of the English administrative organization at this time may be seen in the field of public elementary education. About 1833 the parliament voted certain subsidies to the schools of the two most important educational societies of that time. These subsidies continuing and increasing from year to year, it was decided in 1839 to form a central office or committee in the privy council for the purpose of deciding upon the amount and distribution of the money so appropriated. In 1853 another and a most natural step toward the extension of state control was taken by requiring conformity to certain regulations that were prescribed as a condition of the grant of the subsidies. Inspectors were then appointed by the central committee to report as to the observation of the prescribed regulations on the part of the schools thus benefited. In 1861, the committee of education decided to stipulate certain examinations and to prescribe a certain definite standard for the subsidized schools. In 1870, a still further extension of central control took place. Up to that time the central committee had acted merely as a dispensing agency for the parliamentary appropriations and in this way alone had been enabled to annex certain conditions to each grant of financial assistance, but it was now definitely charged with the establishment and maintenance of an efficient system

of primary education. To this end the committee was also, empowered, in cases where an adequate standard could not be maintained by means of subsidies to private schools, to establish public schools. These public schools then gave rise to still another administrative subdivision, the school district, which was placed under the immediate care of a school board. Finally, in 1876, compulsory attendance was introduced and for this purpose special attendance committees elected in each district.

The local public schools are supported principally by district taxation; the practice of granting important sums of money to both the private and public schools from the central government is, however, still maintained. In this respect the powers of the central authority, the committee on education, have not changed; its powers of direct control and supervision over the public schools, on the contrary, have increased to such an extent as to illustrate most forcibly the progress of administrative centralization in this important field of state activity. It should be mentioned that the school districts often coincide territorially with unions of parishes, boroughs or sanitary districts (local government districts, as they are called), but that even in such cases the administrative organization is, as far as possible, kept separate.

There now remain but two important measures to be described in order to complete this somewhat brief outline of the movement which began in 1834; these are the law of 1888, providing for the reorganization of the county and borough, and that of 1894, concerning the re-establishment of the administrative parish. The two measures named are the most important of the entire series of legislative acts on the subject that have been passed since the initial law of 1834. Not only do they bring to a close the great movement toward centralization whose portrayal is the object of this sketch, but they also mark the definite return of that spirit of local autonomy and decentralization in administrative

matters which has always appeared as an essential factor in the English political system. It may be said, therefore, that with these two acts, that balance of powers between the central and local bodies, which is the crucial point in all methods, of administrative organization has once more been restored in England.

The law of 1888 was based primarily on the desire to extend to the county organization those principles which were already embodied in the acts creating or organizing the other local bodies. The most important of these ideas were, as we have seen, the establishment of an effective control by the central government, the co-operation of wider circles of the people in the conduct of local affairs and the increased dependence of local administrative officers upon the will of the people, or, expressed more briefly, the centralization and "popularization" of the administration. Previous to 1888 almost the entire county administration was in the hands of the "quarter sessions," a court composed of the justices of the peace in the county. The new law simply divided their judicial from their purely administrative functions and transferred the latter to an elected assembly, the county council, in imitation of the borough organization. This left the sessions of the justices of the peace with a judicial competence. The newly created administrative council is mainly a deliberative body; its resolutions and ordinances are executed by the board of aldermen, a committee elected by the council from its own members. Beside those functions more properly belonging to the county administration, the council and aldermen are also given certain powers of control and supervision over the subordinate districts, parishes and unions within the county limits. The council may approve parish loans within certain limits, may itself lend money to the parishes, may grant subsidies to districts for highway administration, may fix the number of councillors in a parish, etc. In its turn, however, the county organization has

been directly subordinated to the central Local Government Board and other central authorities in their respective fields. Finally, the law of 1888, contains a provision of the highest importance to the effect that the Local Government Board, if it sees fit, may transfer to the county still wider and more extensive functions of local administration, and may transfer even such powers as are within the competence of the various secretaries of the central government, of the central committee of primary education already mentioned, of the central Board of Trade or of the Local Government Board itself. It is true that in all these cases the approval of Parliament is necessary, yet in practice the Local Government Board, in the numerous instances which require its attention, has acted with such mature deliberation and with such a thorough knowledge of the case that its recommendations are almost invariably adopted without hesitation.

Before discussing the organization and activity of the Local Government Board, it will be necessary to dwell for a moment on the last of the series of laws intended to effect the reorganization of English local government. The parish was gradually shorn of all its most important functions by the legislation already described. The union of parishes had absorbed the more essential powers in relation to poor-relief, the county had been given the control of the local police by the law of 1856, sanitary or "local government" districts had been created for carrying into execution the laws relating to the public health, and, in numerous instances, highway districts had been created for the maintenance of roads. The parish seemed to have lost all vitality and importance as an administrative unit. The great disadvantages of such a condition are evident. The parish, or commune, as a centre of local life, forms a natural basis for an administrative organization and this fact has been recognized in the local institutions of all modern countries. The chief importance of the act of 1894 lies in its successful

rejuvenation of this, the fundamental unit of rural administration. The well-known, superannuated parish vestry of former times was supplanted by two new bodies,—by the parish meeting, composed of all electors and based, in its internal activity, on the democratic principle “one man, one vote,” and, in parishes with a population of 300 and over, by an additional parish council, of from five to fifteen members elected by the meeting. The more important powers and duties of the parish organization are: taxation, within certain limits fixed by law; loans, when approved by the county board if within certain limits, by the Local Government Board if above those limits; the supervision of charitable institutions within the parish; the surveillance of certain conditions affecting the public health; the adoption of such general laws as have been subjected by Parliament to local option, e. g., regulations of police, lighting, public baths, libraries, burial places, etc.

Although in many of these provisions the element of central control is strongly developed, as, for instance the fact that the sale or exchange of parish realty requires the approval of the Local Government Board, yet there is a marked and definite measure of decentralization shown in the general trend of the law of 1894 as well as of the act of 1888. Without doubt a return to the period of extreme local independence and self-sufficiency is of necessity entirely precluded. Nevertheless by utilizing that most natural of all foundations, the physical fact of close proximity and daily contact and communication of citizens with each other, as a basis on which to build, or rather to rebuild, the parish as an administrative unit, a decided strengthening of local institutions and a corresponding increase in their practical importance has been secured. Again, while adequate provision for central control, direction and supervision has been made, it has nevertheless been possible in consequence of the acts of 1888 and other years to infuse new life, vigor and efficiency into the

organs of local administration by transferring to the local bodies on the recommendation of the Local Government Board such administrative powers as are not considered essential to the central government.

The legislation thus far outlined, involves an enormous increase in central power, and has brought with it important additions to the organization of the central government. The new administrative machinery which has thus resulted, though somewhat complicated in detail, is yet comparatively simple in outline, and is remarkably well adapted to the peculiarities of the system. Aside from the cabinet secretaries, who exercise a control over their respective fields of competence, and the committee of primary education already mentioned, the main part of the work in the central organization falls to the Local Government Board.

The origin of this body has already been traced to the consolidation, in 1871, of the central Poor Law Board with the central Board of Health. The new board resulting from this union consists nominally of a president appointed by the Crown, the President of the Council, the Chancellor of the Exchequer and two others, usually members of the Cabinet. As a rule, however, the functions of the board are performed in practice by the president and two paid secretaries. In addition there is of course a host of subordinate officials, legal counsel, assistant secretaries, inspectors-general, inspectors of local finances, of work-house schools, district auditors, sanitary engineers, medical officials and other technical specialists.

In establishing any system of central administrative control over local bodies the question naturally arises, how is a satisfactory connection to be secured between the central authorities and the local organizations? Two general methods of securing this end were at the disposal of the English legislator; first, that in vogue on the Continent, which consists in the establishment of intermediate or

“provincial” offices, which transmit the instructions and regulations of the central authorities to the local organs, and are charged at the same time with a sort of guardianship over the local bodies; and, second, the establishment of a corps of commissioners and inspectors who keep the central government constantly informed as to the condition of the local bodies, examine local finances and accounts and report on the efficiency of local administration in all its more important details. The Anglo-Saxon looks with no great favor upon a carefully adjusted, symmetrically constructed administrative hierarchy. Nevertheless the relations of the Local Government Board to the county and of the county to the unions, districts and parishes would seem to show some slight influence of Continental and more particularly of French administrative ideas in England. In the main, however, the burden of this task of maintaining a central control over the local administration falls upon machinery organized according to the second method above mentioned. Inspectors, auditors, commissioners are sent out by the central offices to investigate and report on administrative affairs in the various localities. The reports of these agents as well as their recommendations are then made the basis of action taken by the central board.

This may best be illustrated by a brief reference to the powers and activity of the Local Government Board, and its methods of procedure. One of the principal functions of the board is, the approval, rejection or amendment of local by-laws. Again, in the administration of the poor-laws the control and supervision of the central board are especially important and far-reaching; both general and special orders and instructions are issued to the various unions; the composition of meals in the workhouses, the hours of rising and retiring, the hours of work, etc., have all been touched upon more or less in detail by these regulations. The regulating and supervisory activity of the board extends then, in effect, not only to the approval of measures

taken by the local bodies, but also to the issue of positive regulations on its own authority. Under this last-mentioned category would come also those measures taken by the central authority in case of epidemics threatened in wide sections of the country; here the board issues rules relating to ventilation, disinfection, burial, etc.

If we were classifying the functions of the board it would be necessary to place in a third category those important powers exercised in connection with parliamentary acts intended to change the organization and functions of particular local bodies. This special legislation, as it is called in America, is in all cases referred to the board before any legislative action is taken. The board subjects the proposed bill to a critical analysis, orders a thorough investigation by its inspectors and finally, on the basis of the information thus secured reaches a conclusion on the questions involved. This conclusion is then embodied in a formal recommendation to parliament. Such a case illustrates clearly the practical operation as well as the importance of the administrative machinery intended to establish a connection between the central offices and the various localities. A more typical illustration may, however, be seen in the second category of powers above mentioned, viz., the issue of positive commands and injunctions by the board itself. If the parish meeting or council refuses to vote adequate taxes for the purposes assigned by law the local government board may at once intervene and order the amount to be raised; if a parish authority should go so far as to persist in its disobedience to the law, the central board may appoint some person to levy the required taxes and superintend their expenditure for the purposes of parish administration. Somewhat similar powers over the unions of parishes, districts and other local bodies are conferred on the board. Further, each local organization is visited by inspectors of finance and auditors who examine and audit the local accounts at least once, and in some cases twice,

each year. In addition to this there exists a rigid inspection of the local districts, by special medical and school inspectors.

The objects of this organization are to compel the execution by the local bodies of those duties committed to their care, and, to prevent these same local bodies from exceeding the legal limits of their power. Without such a control by the central authority it is not at all improbable that the local organizations, composed of elected boards and councils, and feeling no responsibility except to their electors, might frequently become unmanageable, thus rendering futile for a considerable length of time all efforts to secure a harmonious and efficient administration of local affairs. The central thought of the legislator has been that local administration, though concerned primarily with matters of local interest is nevertheless rapidly becoming of such national import as to render necessary the establishment of a moderate but efficient central control. For this reason, and in the way above described, a practically continuous supervision of the local by the central organization is firmly established and this, too, for the most part, without the aid of those cumbersome and time-consuming intermediate bodies so much in vogue on the Continent.

This description of the organization and powers of the local government board ends our sketch of the historical development of centralization and of its accompanying changes in the administrative organization of England. It must be remembered that in practice the organization is by no means so symmetrical as would appear from the outline just given. There are urban and rural sanitary districts, each with different powers; there are districts and unions of parishes which coincide territorially; finally, numerous changes in the organization and powers of particular local bodies have been introduced by special legislation. Certain important changes have also occurred in municipal organization, particularly in the borough; the character of these

changes, however, has not been essentially different from those that have taken place in the rural bodies. It may, be said that these variations in the local organization though confusing to the student of the English system, by no means affect the conclusions at which we have thus far arrived.

The conclusion of the foregoing study is that there are three general periods in the development of the present organization of local administration in England:—

First, that of the struggle between the crown and the nobles, in which the latter were victorious. By this victory the nobles gradually secured control of the local administration, and this control was subsequently transferred in part to the landed gentry. This is the period of extreme and aristocratic decentralization.

Second, following on a radical change in economic and social conditions, there comes a fundamental political reform, which leads also to the establishment of new organs of local administration more directly in sympathy with the people. At the same time, a marked and important extension of state activity takes place and the great importance of the new duties thus confronting the local bodies renders necessary the establishment of a strong central control. This period, lasting from 1834 to the present time, may be looked on as the era of centralization and popularization.

Third, in the laws of 1888 and 1894 may be found signs of a new tendency. The re-establishment of the parish, though under central control, has led to a comparative strengthening of local institutions. Similarly the transfer from the central to the local organization of those powers not deemed essential to the maintenance of an efficient central control marks the definite close of the era of centralization.

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